



WHITMAN-HANSON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of June 29, 2020

Re-organization Meeting

Held at the Whitman-Hanson Regional High School
600 Franklin Street, Whitman MA

The meeting was held remotely via teleconference

Meeting convened: 7:00 p.m.
Meeting adjourned: 8:16 p.m.
Members present: Robert Hayes, Christopher Scriven, Frederick Small, Michael Jones, Daniel Cullity, Christopher Howard, Steve Bois, Dawn Byers, Hillary Kniffen and David Forth, Jr.
Members absent: None
Administrators present: Jeffrey Szymaniak, Superintendent of Schools
George M. Ferro, Jr., Assistant Superintendent of Schools
John Tuffy, Director of Business and Finance

The virtual meeting was being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 20. The meeting will be recorded and members of the public are able to access the meeting via live stream audio at www.whca.tv/watch/ and on WHCA's Educational Access Channel 98.

Superintendent Szymaniak opened the meeting and announced the School Committee was meeting in a virtual setting, remotely via teleconferencing, and was being recorded and broadcast live on WHCA's Educational Access Channel 98.

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence

Jeffrey Szymaniak, Superintendent of Schools, convened the meeting in order to re-organize the School Committee. The School Committee re-organization meeting was brought to order at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Szymaniak noted the School Committee meeting was being recorded and broadcast audio live. Mr. Szymaniak reported that town elections were held Saturday, June 27, 2020.

The Superintendent congratulated Steve Bois in his re-election campaign and David Forth on his successful election in the Town of Whitman. Mr. Szymaniak thanked Alexandria Taylor for six years of service. The Superintendent congratulated Hillary Kniffen on her successful election in the Town of Hanson. He also thanked Robert O'Brien for nine years of service.

Roll Call for Attendance

Superintendent Szymaniak took attendance by Roll Call. All members were in attendance.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REORGANIZATION ELECTIONS

Superintendent Jeff Szymaniak asked for nominations for the Chair of the School Committee. Mr. Small nominated Robert Hayes. Mr. Cullity seconded the nomination. Superintendent Szymaniak asked for any other nominations for Chair. Hearing none, Mr. Szymaniak closed nominations.

VOTE: Mr. Hayes was nominated by Mr. Small for the position of Chair. Mr. Cullity seconded the nomination. By roll call vote of the Committee Robert Hayes was elected Chair of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Hayes conducted the remaining nominations to organize the Committee for the 2020-2021 school year.

Chair Hayes asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Mr. Bois nominated Christopher Scriven for Vice Chair. Mr. Howard seconded the nomination. Chair Hayes asked for any other nominations for Vice Chair. Hearing none, Chair Hayes closed nominations.

VOTE: Mr. Scriven was nominated by Mr. Bois for the position of Vice Chair. Mr. Howard seconded the nomination. By roll call vote, Christopher Scriven was elected Vice Chair of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hayes asked for nominations for Secretary/Clerk. Mr. Cullity nominated Frederick Small for Secretary/Clerk. Mr. Scriven seconded the nomination. Chair Hayes asked for any other nominations for Secretary. Hearing none, Chair Hayes closed nominations.

VOTE: Mr. Small was nominated by Mr. Cullity for the position of Secretary/Clerk. Mr. Scriven seconded the nomination. By roll call vote, Frederick Small was elected Secretary/Clerk of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hayes asked for nominations for Treasurer. Mr. Small nominated Dan Cullity for Treasurer. Mr. Jones seconded the nomination. Chair Hayes asked for any other nominations for Treasurer. Hearing none, Chair Hayes closed nominations.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity was nominated by Mr. Small for the position of Treasurer. Mr. Jones seconded the nomination. By roll call vote, Daniel Cullity was elected Treasurer of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hayes asked for nominations for Assistant Treasurer. Mr. Small nominated Michael Jones for Assistant Treasurer. Mr. Howard seconded the nomination. Chair Hayes asked for any other nominations for Assistant Treasurer. Hearing none, Chair Hayes closed nominations.

VOTE: Mr. Jones was nominated by Mr. Small for the position of Assistant Treasurer. Mr. Howard seconded the nomination. By roll call vote, Michael Jones was elected Assistant Treasurer of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School Committee for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Facilities and Capital Projects Subcommittee

Mr. Small, Mr. Jones, Mr. Scriven, Ms. Byers and Mr. Cullity were appointed to the Facilities and Capital Projects Subcommittee for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Insurance Subcommittee

Mr. Small, Mr. Bois and Mr. Howard were appointed to the Insurance Subcommittee for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Policy Subcommittee

Mr. Forth, Ms. Byers, Mr. Cullity and Mr. Scriven were appointed to the Policy Subcommittee for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Warrant Subcommittee

Chair Hayes will remain the temporary one warrant signatory configuration during the COVID-19 crisis and state of emergency. In addition, Chair Hayes, Mr. Jones, Mr. Cullity and Mr. Small were appointed to the Warrant Subcommittee for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Pilgrim Area Collaborative Representative

Mr. Bois was appointed as the Pilgrim Area Collaborate Representative for the 2020-2021 School Year. Ms. Byers was appointed as an alternate.

Legislative Representative

Mr. Small, Mr. Jones and Mr. Forth were appointed as Legislative Representatives for the 2020-2021 School Year.

MASC/MASS Joint Conference Delegate/Alternate

Ms. Byers was appointed as the MASC/MASS Joint Conference voting delegate.

Mr. Howard was appointed as the MASC/MASS Joint Conference voting delegate alternate.

Chair Hayes announced all new school committee members are required to take the MA Association of School Committees (MASC) Charting the Course. Workshop dates will be provided to all Committee members.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

June 17, 2020 School Committee meeting minutes

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Cullity seconded; voted by roll call to accept the meeting minutes of June 17, 2020, as presented.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Abstain

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Abstain

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed 8-0-2 with two abstentions.

Chair Hayes announced the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee will be placed on the agenda of the next School Committee meeting for discussion.

Superintendent's Report

Town Election Results

Jeff welcomed new School Committee members David Forth and Hillary Kniffen and Steve Bois on his re-election. Mr. Szymaniak thanked members of the community, who reached out to him personally, in support of the values and ethics which he puts forth as the Superintendent of Schools in his commitment to students in the community, in response to recent negative personal attacks posted on social media platforms.

Superintendent's Evaluation for 2019-20 school year

Superintendent Szymaniak reviewed the process for the Superintendent's goals and year end evaluation. Goals are provided in September and typically, the evaluation is processed in June. Challenges with the Coronavirus pandemic delayed that process in the current virtual environment. The School Committee was provided with the End of Cycle Evaluation Summary template. The Superintendent requested the evaluations be completed and returned by September 1 with the cycle months falling August to August. Former 2019-20 School Committee members Robert O'Brien, Jr. and Alexandria Taylor will also be sent the evaluation tool. The formal evaluation will take place at an upcoming meeting. Mr. Szymaniak identified a number of his 2019-20 goals which he plans

to update the Committee on at the formal evaluation meeting. The Strategic Plan is in progress to be discussed for input at the next School Committee meeting, amending the Regional Agreement and ELA curriculum, to be discussed later in this meeting, and the Whitman Middle School Statement of Interest successfully invited into the MA School Building Authority (MSBA) eligibility period.

Chair Hayes provided a brief overview of the evaluation tool and rubric standards as provided by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Summer Program Updates

Mr. Szymaniak reported on progress for opening selected summer programs. The YMCA Summer Fun program and North River Collaborative Extended School Year (ESY) program have been approved by Whitman Board of Health officials to open. Under the direction of the lead nurse and within the public health guidelines, high school summer camps and sport clinics are being scheduled along with the Panther Science Camp and 3D Camp. Sports clinics fall under Phase III of the Governor's re-opening schedule. The Superintendent discussed the challenges with accepting outside vendor events (building use) and decision to only house school-sponsored camps this summer, where control of foot traffic, tracing and following CDC guidelines is manageable.

DESE Re-opening Guidance

Mr. Szymaniak reported on the re-opening press conference held on June 25 by Governor Baker and DESE Commissioner Riley. All school districts received the re-opening plans from DESE yet, there are still a lot of unknowns at this time. Re-opening restrictions, coupled with being in a 1/12th budget, is causing major challenges financially and with planning a local school re-opening. DESE guidance plan calls for a multiple scenarios of re-opening modules as, a) fully remote distance learning, b) a hybrid of in-person and remote, and c) fully in-person with restrictions (masks, distancing). In addition, home schooling is an option; however, there is a process for parents to notify the school district of the curriculum being used which must also be approved by the Assistant Superintendent. The Superintendent reported he is in conversations with representatives of the Whitman Hanson Education Association (WHEA) on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as to what the platforms and opening school will look like for teachers. Mr. Szymaniak reported parent and staff surveys have been sent out and are in progress. The parent surveys are due back by July 5. Staff surveys are due by June 30.

The Superintendent discussed the probability of layoffs remaining under a one-twelfth budget effective July 1. In addition the cost of unemployment and preparing for school reopening under new is another challenge. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent have conducted building and classroom walk-throughs to determine spacing solutions and identify spacing issues. Concerns with funding, staffing and space are significant. Special education and student services plans are also preparing for possible student regression.

Mr. Szymaniak reported DESE Commissioner Riley is holding another conference call on June 30 at 10:30 a.m. with additional information. Topics include time on learning adjusted from 180 days to 177 days and adding three additional professional days for teachers on personal protection equipment (PPE) and materials in order to prepare for students re-entry under a modified plan. Mr. Szymaniak reported supplemental funding is possible at \$250 per pupil to cover PPE costs. Representative Cutler is working on a bill to approve \$200,000-300,000 in supplemental technology funding (hardware or infrastructure) for remote learning. The District has applied for COVID-19 grant reimbursement under ESSER and with Plymouth County through the towns. The Superintendent reported he has not learned of any specific cuts to Chapter 70 but may see a 5-20% reduction.

Mr. Szymaniak reported no new transportation requirements have been released at this time. Mr. Tuffy added, in conversations with First Student, he learned no additional busses or staff will be added to their fleet. There is concern, not only in regular transportation needs, but also with special education local van transports, and placing regulations on limiting the number of students riding.

Frank Lynam reported the Commonwealth announced the allocation of approximately \$200 million from the Commonwealth's federal Coronavirus Relief Fund for costs related to re-opening public schools. Schools are eligible to receive up to \$225 per student for eligible costs incurred due to the COVID-19 public health

emergency, such as training for school staff, supplemental social and academic services, reconfiguration of school spaces, leasing of temporary facilities, and acquisition of health and hygiene supplies.

ELA Curriculum Proposal

As discussed in the last meeting, Mr. Szymaniak recommended using the transportation savings to purchase a portion of the new ELA curriculum, rather than have the funds roll over to Excess and Deficiency (E&D) and inaccessible until E&D is certified in October. The curriculum program cost is three installments of \$145,000 over three years for a six year license. Mr. Ferro confirmed Houghton-Mifflin “Into Reading” is the ELA Curriculum program which was piloted this year. The program supports Notice & Note, one of the reading strategies used now grades 1-12. Also, the program has a self-diagnostic component for literacy strands and comprehension. In addition, the program has a full complement to the ELL and multiple tiered for classroom reading sets. Into Reading was the clear consensus choice of the pilot, is capable of differentiated instruction and can accommodate remote or hybrid learning environments. The Committee also discussed being cognizant of depleting the E&D in the current budget situation.

VOTE: Mr. Small motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to appropriate \$145,000 for the purchase of the first installment of the new recommended ELA curriculum “Into Reading”, as discussed.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

Budget Discussion

The Superintendent reported Christine Lynch, DESE Office of Regional Governance, informed him earlier in the day that the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District would officially be on an interim 1/12th budget effective July 1, 2020 and figures will be available on July 1. Mr. Szymaniak also clarified with Ms. Lynch, the controversy over the statutory vote of the School Committee in December. The vote provided the leadership with a methodology of assessment in order to present the proposed FY2021 budget in February. That was a nonbinding vote since the School Committee voted to approve, by two-thirds majority in May the amendment to the Regional Agreement (assessment methodology) and to adopt the FY2021 budget and local assessment. In further conversation, Mr. Szymaniak learned that out of 84 regional school districts, a majority use the statutory or default assessment methodology and only ten regional districts still use an agreement method. In addition, communities are moving to the default statutory method and DESE Commissioner will be requiring Boards of Selectmen to sign off if the member towns are using an agreement methodology for the local assessment.

The Superintendent reported on July 1, and under a 1/12th interim budget, the Commissioner of Education will determine the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District budget and local assessment until a budget is approved by both towns.

The Superintendent provided several budget scenarios under a 1/12th interim. The interim budget is typically based on the previous fiscal year budget (FY2020) using the statutory (default) method of assessment using FY2021 Chapter 70 funding figures. Under this assumption, the 1/12th budget assessment using FY21 Cherry Sheet and minimum local contribution, and \$450,00 in Circuit Breaker, the assessment to the Town of Hanson is \$11,397,219.16 and the assessment to the Town of Whitman is \$14,259,517.84.

Under the assumption of FY21 Chapter 70 and minimum local contribution (Cherry Sheet), and if Commissioner allows \$350,000 in E&D and \$700,000 in Circuit Breaker, the assessment to the Town of Hanson is \$11,156,979.16 and the assessment to the Town of Whitman is \$13,899,757.84.

Under the assumption of FY20 Chapter 70 and minimum local contribution only, the assessment to the Town of Hanson is \$11,374,413.46 and the assessment to the town of Whitman is \$14,392,243.54.

Under the assumption of FY20 Chapter 70 and minimum local contribution and if Commissioner allows \$350,000 of E&D and \$700,000 Circuit Breaker, the assessment to the Town of Hanson is \$11,134,173.46 and the assessment to the Town of Whitman is \$14,032,483.54.

For clarity, the FY21 budget adopted by the School Committee was \$55,320,238. Under the proposed amended Regional Agreement compromise, the assessment using E&D and Circuit Breaker as discussed, the total operating and capital assessment to the Town of Hanson is \$11,745,020.21 and the total operating and capital assessment to the Town of Whitman is \$16,206,216.79. Superintendent Szymaniak stated this is recommended budget and local assessment of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District to be voted at the annual town meetings in July. Mr. Szymaniak clarified less the capital and non-mandated bussing under the compromise, the assessment to Hanson is \$11,214,176.79 and the assessment to Whitman is 15,367,391.75.

Once the Commissioner provides the actual budget figures, they will be shared with the School Committee.

Superintendent Szymaniak referred to the DESE release titled “**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET PROCESS, Preparing the Regional Budget**” dated August 27, 2010.

Failure to Approve a Budget

“In the event that the regional school district budget is not approved by at least *two-thirds* of the member municipalities, the regional district school committee shall have *thirty days* to reconsider, amend and resubmit a budget.

With the approval of the Commissioner, a regional district school committee may have *an additional fifteen days* within which to reconsider, amend and reapportion the budget.

The budget shall be reapportioned between or among the member municipalities and a copy of the amended budget shall be provided to the chairmen of the board of selectmen, chairmen of the finance committees, mayors, presidents of the city councils and treasurers of the member municipalities *not later than seven days* from the date the amended budget was adopted by the school committee.

Approval of Reconsidered Budget by Local Appropriating Authorities

Prior to the *expiration of forty-five days* from the date on which such budget was adopted by the regional district school committee, each member municipality shall hold a meeting of the local appropriating authority to act upon the appropriation of the budget.

** (Once the School Committee provides budget to Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee have up to 45 days to put to town meeting)*

If *two-thirds* of the member municipalities vote to appropriate the amounts so reapportioned and recertified to them under the *statutory method*, such budget shall be considered *approved*.

If the member municipalities *unanimously* vote to appropriate the amounts so reapportioned and recertified to them under the *agreement/alternative* method, such budget shall be considered *approved*. (both communities need to approve the proposed amendment to RA)

If a local appropriating authority *does not vote* on the revised budget within the 45-day period that member shall be *deemed to have approved* the revised budget.

Where the local appropriating authority is a town meeting and the annual town meeting is dissolved prior to voting on the budget, the budget shall be deemed *disapproved* by that member as of the date of such dissolution.

District Wide Meetings

In the case of a *two-member regional school district*, if the appropriating authority of *either* member votes not to appropriate the amount so reapportioned and recertified to it, the regional district school committee shall convene a district-wide meeting at which the revised budget and assessments shall be placed before all voters eligible to vote. A district-wide meeting shall only consider budgets based on the statutory assessment method.

Notice of the meeting must be given at least *fourteen days* prior to the date of such meeting.

Approval of the regional school district budget shall require the affirmative vote of at least a *majority of those present and voting* thereon, by a counted vote.

If a majority of voters at this meeting votes to approve a greater or lesser amount for the budget, such amount shall be placed before the regional school committee for its ratification. If the regional school committee by a *two-thirds* vote ratifies this amount, it shall constitute approval. If the regional school committee rejects such greater or lesser amount, it shall again reconsider, amend, and adopt a revised budget and shall reconvene a district-wide meeting. “

The Committee discussed possible scenarios if the budget does not pass in either town and if the override in Hanson should fail and to consider the impact to the towns and school district. Committee member discussed not being in favor of using E&D should the district remain in a 1/12th budget. Chair Hayes anticipates meeting with the Board of Selectmen prior to town meetings in July.

Mr. Tuffy explained his understanding of the 1/12th interim budget process. The Commissioner sets a budget with an expenditure limit. A total is provided based on FY2020 budget. Getting through July and August without the added payroll of staff when school is in session may not be an issue. In terms of cash, the state provides Chapter 70 in monthly installments based on the previous years' Chapter 70 funding, about \$117,000 less than anticipated. The state will also set local assessment figure that the District will use to send to the towns, to be paid by the towns on the regular schedule of the local assessment.

Mr. Szymaniak discussed the challenge of having no member town approved school budget by June 15 and explained the law mandating all non-professional status staff receive notifications of a Reduction in Force (RIF). He explained how RIF'd professional status teachers can contractually bump non-professional status teachers and those with less seniority. Another issue is the cost of unemployment as of July 1 for any staff receiving RIF notifications currently unemployed. The impact of a 1/12th budget situation when teachers return and school reopens in August is a key concern.

Mr. Szymaniak reported the Committee received the S&P Global Ratings Summary for Whitman-Hanson Regional School District. S&P Global Ratings lowered its rating on Whitman-Hanson Regional School District, Mass.' general obligation (GO) debt one notch to 'AA-' from 'AA'. The rating action reflects their opinion of the district's decreased reserves (E&D) due to three consecutive drawdowns during the past few fiscal years.

2020-21 Academic School Year Calendar

Superintendent Szymaniak recommended moving the return to school date for all students PK-12 from August 26, 2020 to September 8, 2020, after the Labor Day holiday weekend. Mr. Szymaniak explained the later start date for students would allow for the DESE Commissioners recommendation to add three professional development days for teachers under the current guidelines for school re-opening in the fall. Mr. Szymaniak noted staff would return on August 27 and 28 for professional development and then again on September 1, 2 and 3 for additional professional development support as recommended by the Commissioner of Education, Jeff Riley. The additional

days would provide more time for training and re-opening preparations under the new guidelines. A revised calendar will become available, pending any new legislation to amend time on learning to 177 days and alternative options for ‘snow days’ as remote learning days.

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Bois seconded; voted by roll call to amend the 2020-21 academic calendar and adjust the first day of school for all students PK-12 to report from August 26, 2020 to September 8, 2020, as discussed.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Whitman Middle Feasibility Study – Building Committee

Mr. Small, Mr. Cullity and Mr. Scriven were appointed to the Whitman Middle School Building Committee Feasibility Study phase.

Proposed changes to the proposed amendment to the Regional Agreement

Mr. Szymaniak recommended tabling the discussion until the Hanson Town Administrator, John Stanbrook responds to the revisions presented from the Town of Whitman.

The next School Committee meeting date will be determine at a later date.

Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Cullity motioned; Mr. Small seconded; voted by roll call to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

Mr. Bois – Yes

Ms. Byers – Yes

Mr. Cullity – Yes

Mr. Forth – Yes

Mr. Howard – Yes

Mr. Jones – Yes

Ms. Kniffen – Yes

Mr. Scriven – Yes

Mr. Small – Yes

Mr. Hayes – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Michelle Lindberg

Signature of School Committee Secretary

Meeting Handouts:

- Meeting agenda and memo for June 29, 2020
- Meeting minutes of June 17, 2020
- Superintendent’s Evaluation tool and copy of original Superintendent’s Goals 2019-20
- Copies of Budget Worksheets previously sent to Committee

- WHRSD 2020-21 SY Academic Calendar
- MSBA School Building Committee form
- Copies of Considerations to the proposed Regional Agreement amendment from Town of Whitman previously sent to Committee
- S&P Global Ratings Summary for Whitman-Hanson Regional School District